



# Attendance Policy

This policy was approved by the Local Governing Body on:-	12 July 2022
The policy owner is:	R Robinson
This policy will be reviewed by the Local Governing Body in: (unless earlier review is recommended by the Trust)	July 2023
Policy Version:	V1.1
Signed by the Chair of the Local Governing Body:-	<i>A Goodson</i>
Ratified by the Board of Trustees	
Signed by the Chair of Trustee Board	<i>John Smith</i>

## Introduction and Aims

Firside Junior School is committed to providing a full and effective education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome and enjoy coming to school.

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We will ensure our pupils are aware of the importance of good attendance and how this will benefit them, in an age appropriate way and by ensuring they feel safe, secure and positive about school.

School attendance is subject to various education laws (see Section 2 below) and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance targets. These will reflect both National and Norfolk attendance targets. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

*Our schools targets are:*

Attendance rate of 97% (Absence rate of 3 % or below)

Persistent absence targets will be significantly below the national percentage.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also considers the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

## Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The government expects all schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

## Definitions

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

“Absence” as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Regular attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised

An “authorised absence” as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency or unavoidable cause

An “unauthorised absence” as:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

“Persistent absenteeism” (PA) as:

- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason

“Parent” as

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person

- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

## **Leave of absence in term time**

Leave of absence during term time will be discouraged. Parents will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement. Since September 2013, changes to Government regulations and guidance means that Headteachers can no longer authorise leave of absence for the sole purpose of a holiday (unless in exceptional circumstances). All absences associated with a holiday (without exceptional circumstance) during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday may be referred to the Local Authority and be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution.

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for child due to 'exceptional circumstances'. The school will consider any application for leave of absence and will only agree to authorise the absence in exceptional circumstances; parents must apply in advance (at least 1 month) for permission for their child to have leave of absence. This may only be granted at the discretion of the Headteacher and all applications for leave of absence will be responded to in writing. Firside Junior School will treat each application individually and discuss with you the circumstances of the application before a decision is made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. In such cases the school may make a referral to the Local Authority to request that a penalty notice fine is issued or consider prosecution.

A penalty notice request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority should: -

- The parent fail to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the headteacher but is still taken.
- A longer period of time is taken in excess of the agreed number of days.

When absence is granted by the headteacher, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

## **Medical Appointments and absence due to illness**

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, we ask that parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment wherever possible. The pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most circumstances, a child should not miss a whole day at school for an appointment. If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, the parent/carer must report to the school's reception, where the school's administration staff will assist in collecting the child from class. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised without the need for parents to supply medical evidence unnecessarily. In line with Department for Education guidance, if we do have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, we may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a child has an emerging pattern of non-attendance, we will discuss the reasons for absence with the child's parent/carer. We will invite parents to attend school-led Attendance Support Panel as an appropriate early intervention strategy. As part of this support we may seek consent from parents and the pupil as appropriate to make a referral to the 5-19 Healthy Child Programme team and/or to liaise with the child's healthcare professional.

Where a pupil has a verified and chronic health condition, we will aim to work with parents to ensure children have access to education and provide appropriate support in line with 'Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school' and Norfolk County Council policies via the Medical Needs Service. We will also consider whether an Individual Healthcare Plan is required.

## **Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance**

Firside Junior School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

## **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils**

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils are among the lowest achieving groups of pupils at every key stage in education, although some GRT pupils achieve very well at school. There are many complex and interwoven factors that may influence the educational attainment of GRT pupils. Schools and Local Authorities can make a big difference to their life chances through:

- Clear high expectation of all pupils, regardless of their background
- An inclusive culture that welcomes all communities
- Strong engagement from parents

In line with The Education Act 1996, Section 444(6) the school will authorise the absence of a pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because:

- the parent is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place,
- that the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits, and
- if the child has attained the age of six, that he has made at least 200 attendances during the period of 12 months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted

This provision applies *only* when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. In these circumstances, parents have a duty to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When a family is trading or otherwise conducting their business in or around Norfolk, if a family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. Firside Junior School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when he or she is not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended Firside Junior School in the last 18 months. Parents can register their children at other schools temporarily while away from their base school; in such cases, the pupil's school place at Firside Junior School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

To ensure we can effectively support all our pupils, we ask that parents:

- Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen; and
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

## **Unauthorised Absence**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and it is accepted as such by the school. The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Arrangements or appointments for cutting the pupil's hair
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- An unwillingness to attend school, or inability to attend owing to inadequate personal/family organisation
- A refusal to attend school on health grounds but where the pupil is considered well enough to attend
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the school

## **Attendance Protocols**

### **Register Keeping and Recording**

Registers open at 8:45am, class teachers record the presence/absence of children in their class. Our office staff will enter any absences that have been phoned/emailed in for that day along with the reason given directly onto the register. Office staff will make calls to those children that we have not heard from. All registers are recorded on Sims by the class teachers for both the morning and afternoon session.

### **Late Arrival at School**

At Firside Junior School all pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year. The school day begins at 8.45am. We advise all parents to ensure their child is on site prior to this. The school register will open at 8.45am. All pupils arriving after this time are required to report to the main office and will be expected to provide a reason for their absence, the reason is recorded on Inventory which is linked to Sims. If their arrival is before 9.15am it will be recorded as late - L code (Late before the close of register).

The school register will officially close at 9.15am. All pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session - U code (Late after the close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the session. Parents will be contacted to discuss

any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

The afternoon registration is at 1.30pm.

Please note: L or U codes will be used if a pupil arrives after the close of the afternoon register for the PM session.

### **Expected absence procedure for parents**

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to contact school by telephone call on the first day of absence and each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return. If no contact is received, then absence protocols will be instigated.

If a child is absent, the following actions will be initiated by the school:

- The first day calling procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register at 9.15am and where no reason for absence is known.
- If there is still no contact made from the pupil's parents, a further telephone call home will be made again that morning. If no response can be gained, the child's named emergency contact will be telephoned and an email will be sent to the pupil's parents
- If school cannot contact a parent and are concerned about a pupil, a home visit may be carried out
- School will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission

In certain circumstances the School may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil.
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues.
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement.
- Refer to an external agency/ support service to offer support, guidance and advice.
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures.
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or consulting with the Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) or the police, where there are safeguarding concerns.

### **A Welcome Back**

It is important that on return from an absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils. If children are going to be absent due to holiday it is our policy that we will not provide holiday work.

### **Frequent Absence**

Within the school it is the responsibility of the head teacher to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. As a school, all staff members understand their responsibility to be

aware of identifying children who are at risk of missing education. School monitors attendance information very carefully and on a regular basis. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible. Standard letters have been developed ready to send out to parents and carers with regard to a range of concerns about a child's attendance.

## **Persistent Absence [PA]**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

The attendance of all pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in the section above. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice, consideration of an Education Supervision Order or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3 month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

## **Reduced timetables**

All schools, academies and free schools have a statutory duty to provide full-time education for all pupils and we are committed to every child's right to a suitable, full-time education offer. In very exceptional circumstances, we may decide to implement one for a time-limited period to meet a pupil's individual needs and only where it is safe to do so. A reduced timetable will not be treated as a long-term solution and will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision. We will never put a reduced timetable in place without written agreement from parent/carer and/or other professionals working with the family as appropriate. This intervention will only be used as a part of a comprehensive package of support for the pupil.

In line with Norfolk County Council guidance, we will notify the Attendance Team of all reduced timetable as soon as a plan has been agreed.

## **Deletions from the Register**

At Firside Junior School we will add and will only delete pupils from our school roll in line with the Pupil Registration Regulations. In most circumstances, we will know in advance about pupils leaving our school; this will be planned and discussed with the parent in advance of the pupil leaving. At Firside Junior School we will always work with families to gain information about the pupil's next school



and/or address before the pupil leaves to reduce the risk of pupils becoming a child missing education through lack of shared information.

We follow Norfolk County Council's Child Missing Education procedures and will inform the Children Missing Education Team of all removals from our school roll no later than the date the child is removed in line with statutory responsibilities.

If a child is removed from roll to home educate, we can only de-register the child if we receive, in writing, the parent's intention to educate their child other than at school. The pupil will be de-registered on receipt of such a letter and Norfolk County Council will be informed of the removal from roll as outlined above. We will also inform Norfolk County Council's Services to Home Educators Team by completing a referral form.

Firside Junior School will follow Norfolk County Council's Children Missing Education procedures when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown, and the school will carry out joint enquiries with Norfolk County Council to establish the whereabouts of the child.

## Roles and Responsibilities

At Firside Junior School, we believe that improved school attendance is a responsibility shared by the Local Advisory Board (LAB), school staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

Role	Name	Contact details
Attendance Lead	Mr S Keer	01603 426550 <a href="mailto:skeer6nrq@nsix.org.uk">skeer6nrq@nsix.org.uk</a>
Named Governor for Attendance	Mr A Goodson	01603 426550 <a href="mailto:office@firside.norfolk.sch.uk">office@firside.norfolk.sch.uk</a>

The LAB will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents.
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at LAB meetings, including monitoring the school's compliance, analysis of data including the potential patterns and causes of absence and the impact of any intervention.
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance.

The Senior Management Team:

- Form positive relationships with pupil's parents and carers, to actively promote the importance and value of good attendance.
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.

- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues.
- Ensure that the Regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with.
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource.
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time.
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the LAB and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented.
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.
- Set out how Pupil Premium will be used to support pupils with irregular attendance.

All staff will:

- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents to promote and support good attendance.
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Comply with the Regulations and other relevant legislation.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner.
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions.
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the importance of attending school at a level that is relevant to their age and stage of development.
- Follow our behaviour code and always try to make the most of all learning opportunities and experiences.

Working alongside families we would request all parents and carers:

- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Contact school by telephone call on the first day of absence and each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return.
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school and help develop their child's positive feelings towards school.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return.

- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their school work or home and family life.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance.
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.

In certain circumstances the School may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil or request a welfare check to be made by the police.
- Refer to an external agency/ support service to offer support, guidance and advice.
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures.
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.
- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or referring to Children Services, where there are safeguarding concerns.

## **Related Policies**

To underpin the values and ethos of our school and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential the following are integral to this approach:

- Safeguarding, including child protection
- Admissions
- Behaviour, including Anti-bullying
- SEN

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- <https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/pupil-safety-and-behaviour/school-attendance> DfE (August 2022 update)
- <https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/pupil-safety-and-behaviour/school-attendance/attendance-news-and-updates>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence>